

**Appendix A.**

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT  
MOORE/FIVE VALLEYS LAND TRUST PROPERTY  
FEE TITLE ACQUISITION**



*Bighorn ram on Moore property.*

Prepared by  
Rob Brooks  
October 5, 2009

## I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 526, passed by the 1987 Legislature (MCA 87-1-241 and MCA 87-1-242), authorizes Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire an interest in land for the purpose of protecting and improving wildlife habitat. These acquisitions can be through fee title, conservation easements, or leasing. In 1989, the Montana legislature passed House Bill 720 requiring that a socio-economic assessment be completed when wildlife habitat is acquired using Habitat Montana monies. These assessments evaluate the significant social and economic impacts of the purchase on local governments, employment, schools, and impacts on local businesses.

This socio-economic evaluation addresses the fee title purchase of the Moore property presently owned by Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT). The report addresses the physical and institutional setting as well as the social and economic impacts associated with the proposed fee title acquisition.

## II. PHYSICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

### A. Property Description

The Moore property is located seven miles from Anaconda, Montana in Deerlodge County. The property that FWP would acquire encompasses 29.74 acres in the Warm Springs Creek drainage close to the Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Area and adjacent to the Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area. A detailed description of this property is included in the environmental assessment (EA).

### B. Habitat and Wildlife Populations

Vegetation consists of native and introduced grasses, native forbs, juniper, and Douglas fir. Shrub-grasslands are the predominant habitat. Spotted knapweed is present onsite. Bighorn sheep use the land extensively and mule deer use the property intermittently. A variety of small mammals and birds found in shrub grasslands are also found here.

### C. Current Use:

The land is currently not used for livestock grazing or any other activities.

### D. Management Alternatives:

- 1) Purchase of the property fee title by FWP
- 2) No purchase

The preferred alternative, fee title purchase, would provide long-term protection of native habitats and protect key habitat for the Lost Creek bighorn sheep herd. The no action alternative, does not guarantee the protection of this parcel from development that may negatively impact wildlife habitat, bighorn sheep, and the other wildlife that use the property.

## **FWP Fee Title Purchase**

The intent of the Moore property purchase is to protect and enhance the wildlife habitat currently found on the property and secure a vital wildlife travel corridor between two Wildlife Management Areas.

## **No Purchase Alternative**

This alternative requires some assumptions because the use and management of the property would vary depending on what the current owners decide to do with the property if this transaction does not happen. There is residential development on private parcels adjacent to and near the property along Montana Highway 1 and the Warm Springs Creek corridor. The economic impacts associated with this alternative have not been calculated.

## **III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

Section II identified the management alternatives this report addresses. The fee title purchase would provide long-term protection of important wildlife habitat and provide for public access. Section III quantifies the social and economic consequences of the two management alternatives following two basic accounting stances: financial and local area impacts.

Financial impacts address the cost of the fee title transfer to FWP and discusses the impacts on tax revenues to local government.

Expenditure data associated with the use of the property provides information for analyzing the impacts these expenditures may have on local businesses (i.e.- income and employment).

### **A. Financial Impacts**

The financial impacts to FWP are related to the purchase, maintenance, and management costs associated with managing this land. The property would be purchased for \$125,000 with funding from the Natural Resource Damage Program's Upper Clark Fork River Restoration Grant Program. In addition, if the grant is approved, \$17,500 in funding would become available from NRDP for five years of startup management activities on the Moore property. This property would be managed as an addition to the existing Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area.

The financial impact to local governments is the potential change in tax revenues resulting from the fee title purchase. Sale of the Moore property to FWP would not change the tax revenues that Deerlodge County currently collects on this parcel. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by Montana Code 87-1-603 to pay "to the county a sum equal to the amount of taxes which would be payable on county assessment of the property were it taxable to a private citizen." The property is currently classified as agricultural land and this classification would not change under FWP ownership.

## **B. Economic Impacts:**

The fee title purchase would not impact local businesses in any significant way. Currently there are no agricultural practices occurring on the property and wildlife associated activities would not change substantially with ownership by FWP.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

As noted at the beginning of this document, the Moore property is located in Deerlodge County near Anaconda, Montana.

The fee title purchase by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks would provide long-term protection for wildlife habitat used by bighorn sheep and other wildlife, maintain the open space integrity of the land, and ensure public recreation opportunities. The fee title purchase and title transfer to FWP would not reduce tax revenues collected on this property from their current levels to Deerlodge County under Montana Code 97-1-603. This purchase would also not have any significant financial impacts on local businesses.